

Guilt is Pain by 000Unknown000

Series: Strange Bonds [4]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Angst, Ann of Green Gables, Guilt, Hurt, Light Angst, Nightmare, Nightmares, Pain, flashbacks of Hopper being the best dad, no hurt/ comfort though, teddy bear, there is a happy ending dont worry

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Summary:

Guilt and pain hold the same purpose.

In small doses, they can teach you by scaring you.

To say sorry and move on.

But in large doses, it can cripple you.

El wakes up from a nightmare and wrestles with past demons.

Guilt is Pain

Author's Note:

I've been dealing with writers block, and struggling with a piece for a while now, when an idea sparked after a nearly sleepless night and thus, this work was born!

Not really the best piece of literature in history, but hope you enjoy!

The floor felt starkly cool and smooth on her feet. She treaded carefully along the worn wooden boards, relying on memory to reach her destination in the pitch darkness.

She stepped over any spots she knew from experience would creak, freezing when she heard a pause in the snoring of Hopper. She took a moment to look at his sleeping form sprawled over the couch, always imposing, yet gentle.

She briefly wished he would wake up, to hug her and maybe even read to her to help her forget the nightmares of the creature chasing across the never ending darkness, and the sounds of crumbling concrete wall and alarm blazing over the panicked shouting, but she immediately took it back. Right now she just needs to be alone.

She shielded her eyes from bright bathroom lights, a burning, but welcome change. She studied her reflection in the mirror, tears glistening down her cheeks, reddened eyes dropping down from the weight of exhaustion the permeated from her body down to her core, resembling a hollowness in the ghost of a girl staring back at her.

What she would of given to have anyone else in the world standing in the mirror before her, someone who's a normal part of society with normal problems.

And someone who's not a monster.

A fresh tear fell, she shut her eyes tight, opening them when the

remnants of her nightmares filled her vision.

Guilt and pain hold the same purpose.

In small doses, they can teach you by scaring you.

Teach you to watch where you step when barefoot on the forest floor, and that friends don't lie.

To say sorry and move on.

But in large doses, it can cripple you.

Eleven may not be able to put this into eloquent words as a poet would, but she can write each word down in other ways.

They are the shakey words to a song quietly sung by Will, his frail and shivering body laid curled up in Castle Byers, trapped in a world she opened.

In the vines wrapping around the rotting corpse corpse of Barbara, and in the crushing despair on her best friend's face as she tried to process that she was gone.

In the bloody teardrops running down the faces of the soldiers and agents. Frozen with morbidly satisfying looks of sheer terror, falling to the floor with no chance of ever getting back up.

She can trace them in the folds of the black shirt and coat tucked far into her closet. Images stitched into them of a gentle looking man proudly posing with two little girls near her age with bright smiles. A far cry from the worker dressed in white turning up the voltage of electricity piercing through her terrified mother's head while she played in the same building, blissfully unaware of her future shattering.

She can hear them in the echoes of her sisters voice, calling out in desperation for the part that makes her whole to return to her. And in the conflicting sparks of anger and love Eleven has for her.

Eleven almost wished she never found Kali, the image of the man's tortured face next to the picture of his daughters burned into her mind, making her question if the people in suits wiped out on the middle school floor also had people who needed them, innocents having to cope with loss.

Maybe someone else lost their mother or father in the same way Eleven had, because of her.

Eleven turned on the faucet with a idea to wash her face, finding the small teddy bear gifted to her by Jim still clutched in her hand. She lifted the bear up, running her other hand across the soft fuzz.

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She can still remember the day when Jim had given it her. She was still getting used to the dusty cabin and to the man who brought her there that everyone called Hopper, but he insisted "Just call me Jim."

She had mostly stayed in her appointed room when he was at the cabin, apart from helping him clean up the place.

She was watching him gathering boxes through her cracked open doorway, he had stopped when his eyes landed on one box in particular, lifting up what looked like a book, staring at the cover like there were secrets inside known only to him.

His eyes suddenly flicked to El and she panicked, retreating inside her bedroom. She heard his voice through the door say ""C'mere, kid."

It was calm, void of any frustration that would signal solitary confinement, so she opened the door and cautiously approached.

"Sorry, didn't mean to scare you." The words surprised her, having only learned the meaning of the "Sorry" when Lucas had said it to her, a mixture of regret and solidarity in his eyes, mirroring her own.

When Eleven relaxed a little, Jim handed her the book he was

looking at, asking her “You like to read?”.

The first thing she had noticed when she saw the town while being sneaked into school by the party was the words. Everywhere she turned there was a sign nailed to pole or printed in big, bold letters hosted atop rooftops that flew by too fast for her to make out, but posed seemingly no obstacle to all the people around her.

Embarrassment stopped Eleven from telling Jim the truth, so she studied the letters printed on the cover and tentatively read out “Ann...of green....ga....” Her voice trailed off her eyes fell in the last foreign word, signaling defeat.

“Ann of Green Gables.” Jim gently corrected, looking at her with sympathy that made El want to retreat back into her bedroom.

She set the book down amongst the the other books inside the box. She peered inside a box to her left when she saw what looked like toys similar to the ones covering the shelves and tables in Mike’s room. Eleven noticed what she thought looked like a tan arm sticking out under a few small people made of plastic.

“Hey, maybe I can help you with the whole reading thing, just lemme see if we have any more beginner books in here....” Jim muttered . El perked up at this, having something good to look forward to, maybe there’s something in the books she could learn, offering her some way to someday settle into alien world.

Someday.

While he was preoccupied, El pulled the tan arm out of the toy box, finding an unfamiliar animal shaped out of fabric that felt soft her hands, with no hard points except for it’s big round eyes and small nose.

It reminded her of what Papa called a “lion”, the one he gave her after crushing a can for the first time, days before doing it again in front of more strangers. She had spent the night hugging close to he, a small tear pooling in her eye because of the headache pounding in her skull, keeping awake all night. She was so drained, she couldn’t move anything with her mind, resulting in....

Eleven noticed out of the corner of her eye Jim watching her, she hurriedly set the bear back in it's place, refusing eye contact.

Jim staying quiet for a few more agonizing moments, before picking the bear up and placing it in her hands with "If you want it, it's yours." She didn't know what her face was telling him, but El was surprised to see sadness in his.

"Look, I don't know what those assholes at the lab did to you, but it's not happening here." He shifted so his eyes met hers.

"I want to help you." He said, emphasizing the word "want".

"Promise?"

El meant to say it forcefully, but her voice came out tiny, showing more anxiety than she knew she had.

He seemed slightly surprised, but a warm smile crossed his face, similar to the ones Mike had given her when he wanted to put her at ease.

"I promise."

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El hugged the bear to her chest, pressing her cheek to the familiar fur that still felt warm from being nestled up against her under the covers. It was sitting beside her after a few months of of what Jim called "Word if the Days". It took awhile, but once she finished, Jim had praised her, telling her how far she came and how proud he was, even going as far as ruffling her hair, making feign annoyance, but giving a smile nonetheless.

Proud

Eleven first heard the word after she found Will in the void, even through her fear of the monster that found her there before, and of the sickening feelings in her gut when she found Barbara's corpse.

It came out of his mother's mouth when she held her sobbing form,

repeatedly telling her “You did so good, I’m so proud of you.”

She heard the same words after the gate was closed, even through the skull crushing headache and exhaustion that racked her tiny body, she could make out everyone from telling her how proud they were of her.

“You did it, El!”

“You did so good!”

“I’m so proud of you.”

“You saved us, I knew you would.”

She didn’t know what proud meant, but with the watery smiles and tight embraces that accompanied them, the words made her smile despite the pain coiled throughout her body and mind.

If you can survive guilt, you’ll walk away with a few aching scars that’ll haunt you, but you’ll be left with a few lessons.

Author's Note:

Originally I wanted to make this darker than it already is, but there's only so much if dad El I can take!

Suffer brothers, please go easy on the poor been in season three!

Edit

I forgot to mention that the whole guilt is pain metaphor was inspired by a quote I saw online

Guilt is to the spirit what pain is to the body
-Elder David A. Bednar

Really recommend searching up quotes and poems for inspiration when you're having trouble writing!